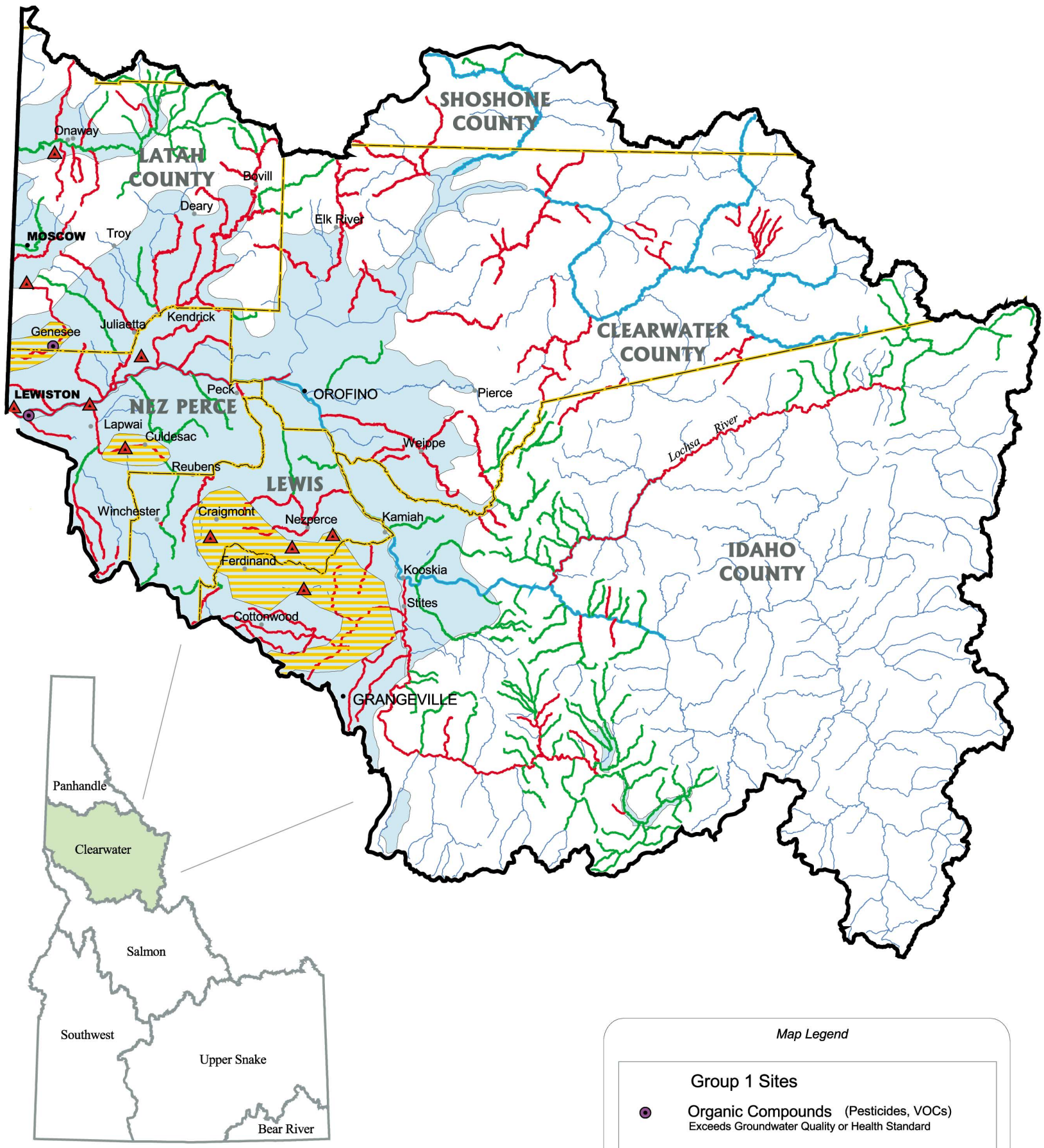
Clearwater Basin

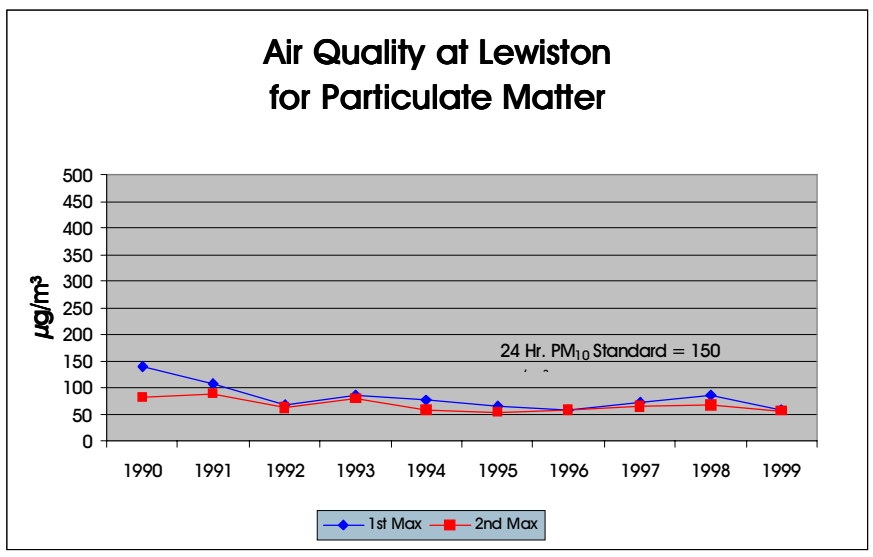


Clearwater

The topography of the Clearwater Basin is characterized by rugged mountainous terrain, coniferous woodland, and the rolling, fertile hills of the Palouse prairie, which is utilized for non-irrigated crop production and rangeland. The majority of the land is public and managed by the U.S. Forest Service. The remaining lands — which are either private, State, or tribal owned — are in the western portion of the basin. The basin is bound by the St. Joe River to the north, the Salmon River to the south, and the Bitteroot Mountain range to the east. The region enjoys consistent precipitation and weather that supports extensive farming of winter wheat and other crops.

Air Quality

The Clearwater Air Quality Control Region has sources of industrially generated particulate matter, odors, and toxic air pollutants; and carbon monoxide from transportation. The area also has large expanses of forest and agricultural production that generate levels of particulate matter from prescribed fires and wild fires. The air quality graph below shows the highest and second highest maximum daily readings of particulate matter from annual monitoring.



Clearwater Air Quality Control Region
Clearwater Airshed
Pollutants of Concern

- Particulate Matter
- Carbon Monoxide
- Hazardous Air Pollutants/Toxic Air Pollutants
- Odors

Ground Water

While the Clearwater Basin doesn't have any significant areas of contamination, three Nitrate Priority Areas and ten Group 1 Sites of concern have been identified. (See the "Clearwater Basin" map for locations. See "Definition of Impacted Ground Water Areas and Sites" on page 4 for explanation of these sites.) These sites consist of sampling points that show values greater than the maximum contaminant level (mcl) for nitrates and organic compounds.

Ground Water Pollutants of Concern
Clearwater Basin

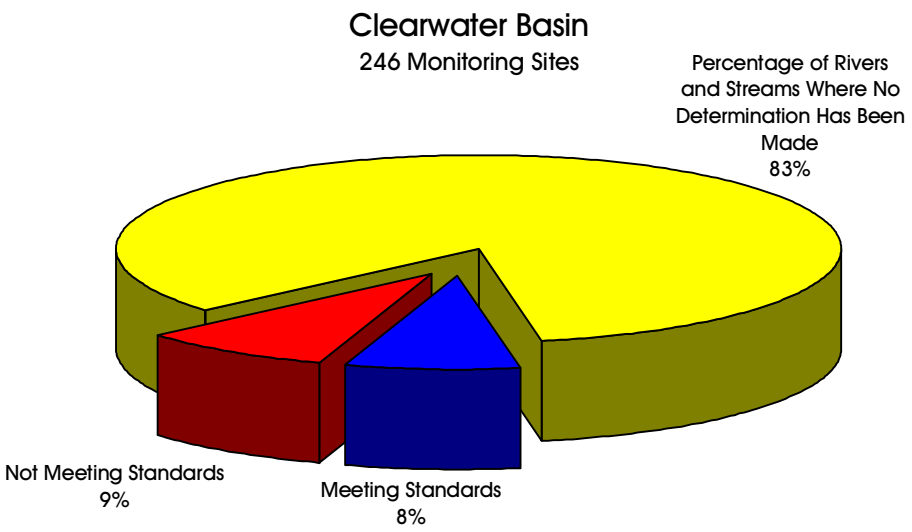
- Nitrates
- Volatile Organic Compounds
  - Gasoline
- Semi-volatile Organic Compounds
  - Diesel
- Organics
  - Pesticides

Surface Water

Water quality priorities in this basin include support of anadromous fish runs (steelhead trout, Chinook salmon, and sockeye salmon); bull trout populations, and surface water supplied drinking water systems. There are 12,674 miles of rivers and streams in the basin. 2,064 miles of surface waters have been assessed for water quality. Of those, the basin currently has 1,078 miles of water quality limited water bodies. Water quality impairments are typically caused by excessive nutrients such as phosphorous and nitrogen, elevated water temperatures, and sediment. The pie chart below shows the percentage of streams meeting water quality standards, the percentage of those not meeting the standards, and the percentage of streams where no specific determination has been made.

Surface Water Pollutants of Concern
Clearwater Basin

- Sediments
- Nutrients
- Temperature



Salmon Habitat and Land Designation
in the Clearwater Basin